



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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REPORTING DEAD CROWS HELPS ASSESS RISK FROM WEST NILE VIRUS

To assist in determining the level of risk to humans posed by West Nile virus (WNV), Monroe County health officials are once again requesting that residents report all dead crows. "Crows, more so than other bird species, appear to be the most susceptible to WNV and therefore serve as an early warning sign about the level of virus circulating in our community," said Monroe County Health Director Dr. Andrew Doniger.

"While we will likely have a number of bird deaths from WNV, a heavy die-off in a particular area would prompt us to look more closely to determine if further actions are necessary to protect the health of nearby residents," Doniger added. Dead bird reports are plotted on a map to identify geographic patterns.

A 'report-line' – **234-9600** – has been set-up to receive information 24 hours a day. Crows are the only species that should be reported at this time. Only a portion of the crows will be tested for WNV. Birds not needed for testing may be bagged and either disposed in the trash or buried. Crows, unlike other black-colored birds, are completely black, including their beak and feet, and are very large, usually over 1-½ feet long.

Health officials continue to stress the importance of: draining standing water to reduce mosquito breeding sites; minimizing exposure to mosquito bites by using insect repellents with DEET; covering exposed skin when outdoors between dusk and dawn; and ensuring that screens are in good condition.

While mosquitoes are already circulating, the species that most often carries WNV does not usually reach its peak until much later in the summer. Health Department staff conduct on-going surveillance for both adult mosquitoes and mosquito larvae in various locations throughout the county. The data are used to predict when more threatening species are expected to be at their peak intensity.

Albany and Rockland counties recorded birds dying from WNV last week. Over 700 birds tested positive for WNV statewide last year. Two New Yorkers, both from Long Island, died from WNV in 2001. Health Department staff are in close contact with health care providers across Monroe County to quickly identify human cases of WNV.

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For More Information,

Contact: Communications and Special Events at 428-2380

Or visit us on the Web: www.monroecounty.gov

